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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2012  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3009  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1307  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3348  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2734  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000246

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HOSTS INFORMAL MEETING BETWEEN KYRGYZ  
FOREIGN MINISTER AND IRI COUNTRY DIRECTOR

REF: A. BISHKEK 237

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 195

BISHKEK 00000246 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On March 18, the Ambassador hosted an informal meeting at her residence between Foreign Minister Sarbayev and the Country Director of the International Republican Institute (IRI). Similar to a meeting the previous week with the local head of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the meeting was cordial and lasted over an hour. The Foreign Minister was interested in IRI's work to develop political parties, as well as IRI's public opinion polling in Kyrgyzstan. They also discussed the potential impact of a proposed new law on non-governmental organizations (see Ref B). The Foreign Minister requested that IRI consider organizing an expert-level conference, either on human rights or on the risks to youth of religious extremism. This was the second in a series of informal meetings that the Ambassador is organizing to brief Sarbayev on U.S. assistance programming in Kyrgyzstan. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On March 18, the Ambassador hosted Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev and the IRI Country Director, Peter Sondergaard, for an informal discussion over tea at her residence. This was the second in a series of individual, informal meetings that the Ambassador had proposed to brief Sarbayev on U.S. assistance programming, in order to counter Sarbayev's earlier allegation that U.S. programming to support civil society was biased against President Bakiyev and the government. Note: Sarbayev met with the NDI Country Representative on March 11 (Ref A), and he is scheduled to meet in the future with the USAID country representative and the Millennium Challenge Threshold Country Program coordinator. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) The meeting was very cordial, and the Foreign Minister and Sondergaard engaged in a lively discussion of the nature of democracy. Turning to IRI's political party program, Sarbayev made the somewhat surprising statement that "not a

single party" in the Kyrgyz Republic has a substantive platform or program (presumably including President Bakiyev's Ak Jol). Sarbayev also questioned the value of working with some parties whose leaders were not "genuine democrats." Sondergaard told the Minister about IRI's work with parties to develop specific platforms, and he presented Sarbayev with a copy of a recently published book containing the platforms of 13 different parties. (Note: The ruling Ak Jol Party did not respond to the questionnaire about platform topics and was not included in the book. End Note.) Sondergaard emphasized that IRI was open to working with all parties, unless a party was openly anti-democratic.

¶4. (C) Sondargaard also gave the Minister a copy of IRI's most recent (November 2008) public opinion poll in Kyrgyzstan. Sarbayev read quickly through the poll's tables, noting that stability and security were the top concerns for a majority of those polled. Sarbayev implied that work with the opposition could be destabilizing. Sondergaard explained that IRI's work supported the democratic process, and not any particular result. He argued that democracy was tied to long-term stability. The Ambassador pointed out that there will always be people who oppose the government, and that if the government stifles political party activity, then there is a danger that those people will express their opposition in other ways, such as through religious extremism. Sarbayev agreed.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador, Foreign Minister, and Sondergaard also discussed a proposed new law that would restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations (Ref B). No one disagreed with the Minister that it was the right of three Members of Parliament to have introduced this law for

BISHKEK 00000246 002.2 OF 002

discussion, but the Ambassador and Sondergaard pointed out that as currently drafted, the law would curtail the work of a wide range of organizations, including providers of humanitarian assistance.

¶6. (C) Sarbayev asked that IRI consider organizing an expert-level conference on human rights, or on the danger to youth of religious extremism.

¶7. (C) Comment: Sarbayev appeared interested in learning about IRI's work, and he was ready to engage on the issue of democratic development in Kyrgyzstan. As in the previous meeting with the NDI country director, the informal setting allowed for a frank exchange of views. We remain hopeful that this and future meetings will help counter suspicions held by many in the Kyrgyz government that U.S. assistance programs are biased against the government.  
GFOELLER